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### **Tourism and Gendered hosts and guests**

**Purpose:** This conceptual paper aims to contribute to the extant tourism and gender literature by highlighting a tendency towards the conceptualisation of gendered research participants as host or guest depending upon their nationality.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The argument presented here is based on a critical review of literature concerned with gender and tourism, focusing specifically on studies that include participant voices since 2010.

**Findings:** The paper identifies a tendency in research on gender and tourism to conceptualise women and men from the West as guests and women and men from the Rest as hosts. It is argued that working within this dominant framework can equate to an overlooking of many issues facing women and men globally, in doing so it paves the way for future research and opens dialogue for important conversations on gender and feminist research in the academic field of tourism.

**Research limitations/implications:** This article aims to highlight a limitation in theorising rather than provide an exhaustive or systematic review of the literature. Future research trajectories are outlined.

**Key words:** Gender; Tourism; hosts; guests

### **Introduction**

Research on the critical intersections between tourism and gender gained momentum in the mid-1990s, with publications such as the special issue on gender and tourism in the *Annals of Tourism Research* edited by Margaret Swain (1995) and the seminal text *Tourism: gender perspectives* by Kinnaird, Kothari, and Hall (1994). Since then the area has grown and strengthened to include studies on vital areas such as sexuality, and even gender within the academy itself (Munar, et al., 2015; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017). However, even though innovative research trajectories are emerging, the field is still dominated by several themes such as sex tourism and tourism employment (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Pritchard, 2001;

Scheyvens, 2002, 2008; Ferguson, 2011; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012; Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015). As highlighted by a recent review of literature on gender and tourism certain theoretical contributions from other disciplines that appear to have had little influence, such as postcolonial feminism (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015). Moreover, critical approaches to the study of gender and tourism are said to constitute just 26% of the top five Australian ranked tourism journal articles on gender and tourism (Small, Harris & Wilson, 2017).

In 2015, a literature review on gender and tourism was published in the *Annals of Tourism Research* (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015), marking two decades of systematic scholarship in this area. In 2017 a further review was published focussing on top ranking journals according to the Australian system (Small, Harris & Wilson, 2017). The emergence of such reviews suggests that it is time we take stock of previous studies in order to chart new directions and highlight the importance of extant trajectories. This paper aims to contribute to this tendency by providing an analysis of scholarship on gender and tourism since 2010.

In contrast to past reviews, this review is by no means exhaustive or systematic, as this has already been carried out by Figueroa-Domecq et al., (2015), and Small, Harris & Wilson (2017). Systematic literature reviews on gender and tourism have begun to focus on specific geographical contexts (Yang & Tavakoli, 2016) and quantify research on certain theoretical areas, such as risk and gender in tourism research (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2017b). Therefore, rather than taking a systematic, quantitative approach, this paper critically assesses the use of gendered host/guest conceptualisations in published studies in academic journals that explicitly focus on participant voices. The paper begins by highlighting the importance of gender research within tourism, before charting the potential implications of the findings of previous literature reviews. Two tables summarising and categorising studies since 2010, the year which marked the first collaboration between UN Women and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (UNWTO & UN Women, 2011), are presented, each paper is categorised by context and conceptualisation. Finally, future research trajectories are highlighted.

## **Tourism and gender research**

In the special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, Swain (1995) introduced a definition of gender which would become widely used as a starting point for future research, she argued that gender could be conceptualised in terms of identity that can relate to both men and women, and that gender identities are culturally and socially constructed. Even though gender refers to both

femininities and masculinities, by the close of the year 2016, no one country had achieved gender equality, and it is women who more often than men face discrimination, violence, gender pay inequality, and poverty (World Economic Forum, 2016).

The links between tourism and women were explicitly highlighted in the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Global Report on Women and Tourism 2010 (UNWTO & UN Women, 2011). The report suggested that tourism could aid in the attainment of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3): the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (Ferguson, 2011; Tucker and Boonabaana, 2012). Subsequent to 2015 the UNWTO further stressed its commitment to the re-packaged Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and in particular SDG 5 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' (UNWTO, 2016). The UNWTOs focus on tourism as a vehicle for female empowerment and gender equality is justified by the ability of the industry to employ women, particularly due to low entry barriers and flexible working hours (Chant, 1997; Gentry, 2007; UNWTO & UN Women, 2011).

However, the necessity of low entry barriers and flexible working hours to enable women's participation is at least in part due to existing gender inequalities, and the tourism industry can be critiqued for its reliance on 'a large global supply of highly flexibilised and low-paid female workers' (Ferguson, 2011:237). This might suggest that the 'the very structure of international tourism needs patriarchy to survive' (Enloe, 2000: 41). Moreover it has long been noted that the consequences and access to tourism employment may perpetuate the construction of existing gendered identities and roles, and intensify discrimination (Swain, 1995). Furthermore, the reduction of empowerment to economic empowerment fails to address the multitude of elements that intersect to shape 'how people view themselves-their sense of self-worth. This in turn is critically bound up with how they are seen by those around them and by their society' (Kabeer, 2005: 15), which is at the roots of both empowerment and disempowerment. Surprisingly, while the contentious relationship between female empowerment, tourism, and indeed gender equality has been noted, studies on gender and tourism remain marginal (Figueroa-Domecq, et al., 2015). This is more than enough justification for a continued focus on women within the field of tourism.

Where gender may have evaded many tourism scholars, the term host is ubiquitous to the school. Utilised to (re)present local populations found in the tourist destination, its roots can be traced in the seminal anthropological work of Valene Smith (1989) *Hosts and Guests*. The

terms hosts and guests are contested and have been critiqued for creating binary opposites, when it is suggested that both roles are in fact far more fluid than first thought (Sherlock, 2001). However, the binary opposites of hosts and guests have been useful for tourism theorising, providing a language to name things. Yet, in naming lies the potential risk of the reification of stereotypes and ‘in Tourism Studies we need to confront out permanent complicity in structures of inequality, injustice and violence that we spend so much time trying to alleviate’ (Swain, 2009: 520). This complicity might include the conceptualisation of hosts and guests, as suggested by Swain (2009), but in particular and in relation to both gender equality and female empowerment we might focus on the immobile female host.

Swain’s (2009) warning is heeded in the edited book *Asian Genders in Tourism* by Khoo-Lattimore & Mura (2016), which includes the voices of Asian scholars as they primarily discuss tourist experiences within the chapters. Yet, the extant body of literature concerned with Asian contexts has been critiqued for treating gender as simply another variable, and those studies that refrain from simply adding women or men, are critiqued for continuing to conceptualise Asian women as producers or hosts rather than tourists or guests (Yang & Tavakoli, 2016). This manner of conceptualising hosts might in some circumstances be understood as a (Re)presentation of the Other, which consistently calls upon essentialist ideals, viewing members of a group in a simplistic, homogeneous manner (Andsager & Drzewiecka, 2002). Essentialist strategies are reductionist in nature, throwing away that which is not necessary for the (re)presentation in question, an act enabled by ‘wilful ignorance’ (Jack & Westwood, 2009: 172). On the other hand, this pattern could in some circumstances be read as ‘strategic essentialism’ (Spivak, 1988), where it might be necessary to re-create a simplistic, essentialised category in order to draw attention to the stark imbalances and inequalities between groups.

## **Reviewing the literature**

The charting of who has been conceptualised as female/male host or guest could help to identify research questions and knowledge that at present remain outside the academic field of tourism. Rather than providing a systematic review, or quantifying the literature, which is a popular approach and as previously stated has been done elsewhere (see Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015; Small, Harris & Wilson, 2017; Yang & Tavakoli, 2016; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2017b), this paper aims to develop an argument grounded on a critical analytical review of the literature (Cohen & Gössling, 2015). The aim of this approach is to critically assess the use of

gendered host/guest conceptualisations in published studies in academic journals that explicitly focus on participant voices.

Systematic reviews are an excellent method to chart the path of scholarly activity, but this article utilises a more critical approach to suggest a limitation of current scholarship. In contrast to previous reviews, Google Scholar was chosen as the database for searching over other databases such as Scopus or Web of Science, primarily because it is not limited by indexing procedures, it has the option to search ‘cited by’, and due to its popularity among researchers (Bakkalbasi, et al., 2006). The review is not limited to only top ranking tourism journals, but includes articles from a range of journals across disciplines, it is however limited to only those journals published in English.

In order to identify potentially relevant articles “gender or female or male or men or women”, and “tourism” were used as the search terms. Hosts or guests were not used as search terms as many scholars may not explicitly use these terms even though they create the conceptualisations. Articles with an explicit critical focus on women or women and men within tourism rather than families or hospitality, leisure and events were included. The results were filtered by using the timeline option of since 2010. Once a paper had been identified, the author read the abstract and methodology to ascertain if participants had been given a voice within the paper; those that had not were not included (for example conceptual papers or literature reviews). Specifically, papers considering moderators and mediators of gendered decision making and more positivist studies were excluded. Once the literature had been identified, I read each paper and performed a qualitative content analysis (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008) to categorise how the scholar had conceptualised the people in their study – as hosts or as guests, the results of which can be found in the following section.

There are obvious limitations to this approach, as previously highlighted it does not provide an exhaustive review. This approach is open to human error and ultimately I am in charge of deciding how another academic has chosen (either consciously or unconsciously) to conceive of gendered identities – male/man or female/women as host or as guest. However, I believe all knowledge to be shaped by its producer, and perhaps the most important limitation of this paper is that it focusses only on research published in English. It would be useful to identify how speakers of other languages conceptualise both people from their home country and those from Other countries.

## Gendered hosts and guests

Tables I and II present the categorisation of the selected literature on gender and tourism research, these tables are not an exhaustive representation, but aim to summarise key literature since 2010 in order to identify how women and men have been conceptualised as either host or guest.

Table I: Gender and tourism studies conceptualising women and men as hosts

Author, year	Context
Babb, 2012	Women and men in Peru and Mexico
Cole & Ferguson, 2015	Women and men in Costa Rica
Duffy et al., 2015	Women and men in the Dominican Republic
Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016	Women and men in Cameroon
Ling, et al., 2013	Women in Cuandixia, China
Tajeddini, et al., 2017	Women in Bali
Tran & Walter, 2014	Women and men in Vietnam
Tucker & Boonabaana, 2011	Women in Turkey & women and men in Uganda
Wilson et al., 2012	Women in Mexico
Ypeij, 2012	Women and men in Peru

Table II: Gender and tourism studies conceptualising women and men as guests

Author, year	Context
Brown & Osman 2017	British female tourists in Egypt
Berdychevsky et al., 2013	Israeli female tourists
Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015	Israeli female tourists
Frohlick, 2013	North American women in Costa Rica
Guo, 2014	Chinese women
Heimtun, 2010	Norwegian female tourists guests
Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013	Norwegian women and men
McNamara & Prideaux, 2010	Australian, British, US women in Australia
Small, 2016	Australian women
Weichselbaumer, 2012	Western women in Trinidad and Tobago
Yang, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, C, 2017a	Asian (Chinese, Taiwanese, Honkongese, Japanese, Korean, Malaysian, Singaporean, Indonesian, Thai & Vietnamese) women as solo tourists

Table I evidences a trend in the gender and tourism publications reviewed to refrain from conceptualising women and men from North America and Europe as hosts, as only Latin Americans, Asians and Africans can be located in this categorisation. Interestingly, while most articles appear to focus on one nationality, Cole and Ferguson (2015) interviewed men and women from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the West on the topics of tourism and water. Both the Nicaraguan group and the Westerners are conceptualised as migrant workers or perhaps temporary hosts, a perspective which disrupts the trend. China is the only country where women have been the focus of studies on hosts and guests. In addition to Chinese women, Asian, British, North American, Australian, Norwegian and Israeli women have been conceptualised as guests (as displayed in table II).

Interestingly, whereas seven out of ten articles conceptualising participants as hosts included both female and male participants, only one article considering a guest perspective did the same (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013). Perhaps research concerning hosts is more likely to include both men and women as this perspective might be centred on how gender is constructed or negotiated within these developing contexts. Research on gendered tourists appears to be concerned with the female tourist experience, rather than how gender is constructed and negotiated relationally on holiday. Although, this focus on women's experiences is admirable, necessary and important, studies including men might allow new insights, as well as the study of new topics. Overall there is a propensity for tourism researchers to conceptualise women from the West as guest and women from the Rest as host.

In some ways this pattern of conceptualisations could be read as an overall tendency to essentialise, and essentialist depictions of women and men have been critiqued for marginalising voices and overlooking plurality in experience (Swain, 1995). However, this pattern might also be related to 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1988), the (re)creation of the monolithic category of host or guest woman can highlight the asymmetrical power relations and mobilities of both host and guest or tourist generating and receiving societies. Strategic essentialism may be necessary to gain female rights and influence policy; feminists may have to ignore the more intersectional nature of women. Yet, the notion of a monolithic woman has been challenged by postcolonial feminists (Mohanty, 1991) as too simplistic, often ignoring other characteristics, such as race, nationality, class or age (Cotterill, 1992).



The two categories of host and guest may be shaped by the linguistic ability of gender and tourism scholars, for example McNamara & Prideaux (2010) identify linguistic ability as a limitation of their survey method as only those fluent in English and later in Chinese could be included in their study on guests. Studies limited by linguistic ability can mean that guests who speak languages other to those of the researchers are not included in conceptualisations of guests. In addition to this, categorisations may be at risk of over simplification or even making value judgements, for example one study utilises 'Western women' to classify guests in Trinidad and Tobago (Weichselbaumer, 2012). This categorisation is at risk of repeating the same universalising patterns found within some Western feminist theorising that has been heavily critiqued by postcolonial feminists (Mohanty, 1991).

Bandyopadhyay (2013) has previously highlighted a tendency towards conceptualisations of a powerful West producing sex tourists wishing or desiring to consume the East, which may have equated to an overlooking or even ignoring of Other tourists seeking romance or sex in the West. This argument can be extended to other areas of gender and tourism research, and as identified in tables I and II there is a propensity to conceptualise women from tourist generating countries as guest and women from tourist receiving countries as host. This can be strategic, it can be an acknowledgement of the power relationships between West and Rest (Hall, 1992), but it can also overlook issues facing host women specifically. In the 2016 edition of the UNWTO tourism highlights, Europe was still the world's largest source region, but it was followed by the Asia and the Pacific (24%), the Americas (17%), the Middle East (3%) and Africa (3%). Moreover, China, Russia and Korea were all in the top ten spenders (UNWTO, 2016), if academics continue to refrain from conceptualising those from these regions as guests they may be ignoring a reality that exists for many tourists around the world.

### **Future research trajectories**

The influence of a host/guest binary which traps each group of women into their respective (or even imagined) tourist generating/tourist receiving region, may mean that intra-regional power relations are overlooked as we continue to focus on West/rest. Yet, this is more an observation than a critique, and this observation does not suggest that this focus is no longer important, necessary or fruitful. This observation is highlighted in this paper to promote future avenues of research that may conceive of female hosts as guests and female guests as hosts. A destabilising of existing conceptualisations may aid in a renegotiation of focus to include both intra and

interregional power issues. A focus on the intra could help to build an understanding of many of the issues facing societies traditionally conceived of as host today.

Here it is worth reiterating that the reduction of Other women to host, which in some ways invokes the contested notion of strategic essentialism, might be understood not as a 'union ticket for essentialism' (Danius, Jonsson, & Spivak, 1993: 35), but to identify and (re)present the marginal. However, this reduction also overlooks many issues facing 'host' women today, issues such as sexual violence or domestic violence on holiday, or the social construction of gender roles within the context of tourism. These experiences have been analysed by Yang, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, C, (2017a) within the context of Asian solo female travel, and future research may choose to break down the category of Asian to focus on specific contexts. It is thought that in order to explore all of the ways in which tourism might empower women we must include their own possibilities for travel and their travel experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This article has provided a brief review of studies exploring femininities in tourism since 2010, focussing on those studies that include the voice of participants. The review highlights a tendency of tourism research to create a binary relationship between women in the West as 'guest' and women in the Rest as 'host'. It is argued that this tendency could be conceived of as a form of strategic essentialism, in order to both highlight disparities across contexts and (re)present marginalised communities. Yet, this tendency may lead to certain areas and issues facing 'host' women being ignored and under explored the most alarming potential implication of this tendency in conceptualisation is that as tourism researchers we may be perpetuating the same inequalities we seek to disrupt (Swain, 2009).

However, the argument presented here is not that tourism researchers should stop this form of conceptualisation, but that new conceptualisations should be added to potential research topics and questions. More research is needed to explore the tourist experiences of women often conceptualised as 'hosts', and this research could explore topics that have received some attention within scholarship on Western female tourists such as how gender is socially constructed on holiday, or how gender norms are re-enforced on holiday, or sex tourism. Other research topics have failed to attract interest from scholars analysing the lived experiences of hosts or guests from any context, one such topic might be gender based violence on holiday.

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